

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

CUBAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

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Thesis: In May 2001 the Bush administration announced a new Cuban-American policy, which clearly articulated its desired strategic “ends”:

“Full normalization of relations with Cuba will only be possible when Cuba has a new government that is fully democratic, when the rule of law is respected, and when the human rights of all Cubans are fully protected.”

Rationale: This Strategic Research paper will argue the current Cuban-American policy is counter-productive, that is, it will not result in the achievement of stated U.S. objectives. Therefore, the current policy is not suitable, feasible, nor acceptable in terms of achieving stated or desired strategic “ends.”

For over four decades the United States has continued to reinforce failure by imposing trade sanctions against a Castro dominated Cuba, that have resulted in no regime change. Currently, Cuba poses no threat to the United States. However, should the United States continue its current policy against this Caribbean nation the long-term threat may increase significantly as Cuba embraces less desirable nations, such as China, that actively desire more influence in the Western Hemisphere

Approach: This Strategic Research Paper will initially review past Cuban-American relations that led to the present policy. Second, the current policy will be analyzed by discussing the “ends,” “ways,” and “means.” Suitability, feasibility, and acceptability of the current policy will be reviewed and a risk assessment conducted to determine its potential impact on future national security. Finally, this paper will conclude with a recommendation for a revised Cuban-American.

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CUBAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

In May 2001, the Bush Administration announced a new Cuban-American policy, which clearly articulated its desired strategic “ends”:

“The fundamental goal of United States policy toward Cuba is to promote a peaceful transition to a stable, democratic form of government and respect for human rights. Our policy has two fundamental components: maintaining pressure on the Cuban Government for change through the embargo and the Libertad Act while providing humanitarian assistance to the Cuban people, and working to aid the development of civil society in the country.” ¹

This Strategic Research Paper will argue the current Cuban-American policy is counter-productive, that is, it will not result in the achievement of stated U.S. objectives. Therefore, the current policy is not suitable, feasible, nor acceptable in terms of achieving stated or desired strategic “ends.”

For over four decades the United States has continued to reinforce failure by imposing trade sanctions against a Castro dominated Cuba, that have resulted in no positive change in that regime. Currently, Cuba poses no threat to the United States. However, should the United States continue its current policy against this Caribbean nation the long-term threat may increase significantly as Cuba embraces potentially hostile nations, such as China, that actively desire more influence in the Western Hemisphere.

This Strategic Research Paper will initially review past Cuban-American relations that led to the present policy. Second, the current policy will be analyzed by discussing the “ends,” “ways,” and “means.” Suitability, feasibility, and acceptability of the current policy will be reviewed and a risk assessment conducted to determine its potential impact on future national security. Finally, this paper will conclude with a recommendation for a revised Cuban-American policy.

HISTORIC OVERVIEW

During the 1940s, Cuba was a promising example for democracy in the Caribbean. Characterized by a history of violence and poverty this small island nation was starting to flourish as a splendid example of democracy. Free elections and a progressive Constitution were in place and upheld. The islands health care system was the envy of Latin America and was showcased for having some of the lowest infant mortality rates in the region. Education was free from kindergarten to university and was available to all who qualified. Labor rights provided

for equal pay and extended social security. Even the standard of living was on the rise as it showed signs of outpacing neighbors such as Venezuela, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile.² However, much of this progress would be lost within the following decade.

The advances made by Cuba abruptly ended in 1952 when former President Fulgencio Batista found himself trailing in the polls for the presidential election and decided to take the matter out of the hands of the voters.³ Seizing power, Batista suspended the Constitution and cancelled all free elections. Those who opposed Batista's dictatorship called for the return to the 1940 Constitution to include Fidel Castro and his guerilla rebels who used the same platform to gain widespread support for his eventual revolution.⁴

By 1959, Castro had seized power forcing Batista to flee the island in exile. With optimistic support from most Cuban's, Castro reassured the island nation he would reinstate free elections and civil liberties as quickly as possible. Instead, Castro rewarded his supporters with continued suppression of civil liberties and ruthlessly eliminated all institutions that posed a threat to his new regime.

EMBARGO I (1960-1990)

In an effort to maintain U.S. influence on the island, President Eisenhower quickly recognized Castro as Cuba's new legitimate leader. However, all hopes for continuing such a relationship would soon be over. By July 1960, the U.S. would impose economic sanctions (with the exception of food and medicine) against Castro's regime in retaliation for the nationalization of U.S. owned oil refineries located on the island.⁵

Although the initial sanctions were triggered by expropriation of U.S. property, the embargo eventually became linked to national security interests when it was learned Soviet military facilities were established in Cuba and the Castro government supported communist subversion throughout the hemisphere and elsewhere.⁶ Learning that Cuba was distributing illegal arms to Latin America in 1962, President Kennedy imposed an almost total embargo on trade and travel to the island.⁷ In October, Soviet efforts to deploy nuclear missiles to Cuba compelled President Kennedy to terminate all diplomatic relations with the island and successfully petition the Organization of American States (OAS) to expel Cuban membership.⁸

For the next decade, American diplomacy regarding Cuba remained unchanged until the 1970s when the Nixon and Ford Administrations explored opportunities to reestablish diplomatic relations. This attempt failed as Castro had little desire to engage the United States when considering the Soviet Union was providing the island massive financial support, which ensured reasonable prosperity despite U.S. sanctions.⁹ Unresponsive to U.S. interests Castro defiantly

deployed 30,000 Cuban troops to Angola in 1975 thus causing President Ford to suspend negotiations.¹⁰ However, by 1977, the Carter Administration succeeded in establishing limited diplomatic inroads with Cuba by agreeing on limited travel to the island, signing a fishing and maritime border agreement, and for the first time since diplomatic relations were severed in 1962, Interest Sections were established in respective capitals.¹¹

During the 1980s, the Reagan and Bush Administrations made no effort to reengage Cuba. The primary concern of both administrations was to do whatever necessary to curtail Castro's continued exportation of revolutionary ideology throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Relations between both countries remained one of hostility, isolation and economic denial as witnessed by the "Mariel" crisis in 1980 and the U.S. military intervention of Grenada in 1983.¹² Continuing to rely heavily on the Soviet Union for its economic well being Cuba would soon see an end to Moscow's generous subsidies as the 1990s ushered in the Post Cold War era.¹³

EMBARGO II (1990-2000)

With the ouster of communism from Eastern Europe in the early 1990s, there was guarded optimism that Cuba would soon follow. As Soviet economic aid to the island dropped from \$6 billion in 1989 to near zero in 1992, it only stood to reason that Castro's regime would be brought to its knees by the full impact of U.S. sanctions.¹⁴ These assumptions eventually proved incorrect, as Castro wasted little time finding new trading partners from Western Europe, Canada, and Mexico eager to replace the Soviets. Additionally, U.S. officials feared much of this new trade involved foreign subsidiaries owned by U.S. multinational corporations.

Eager to quicken Castro's ouster Senator Robert Torricelli (D-N.J.) introduced new legislation known as the Cuban Democracy Act (CDA) in 1992. This legislation essentially reinforced U.S. sanctions against Cuba by increasing restrictions on humanitarian aid, specifically food, medicines and medical supplies; refusing entry to U.S. ports of any vessel that had traded with Cuba within the past 180 days; and authorizing sanctions against countries "assisting" Cuba.¹⁵ The "CDA" also allowed the president to undertake "carefully calibrated" steps to improve relations with Cuba if specific democratic conditions were achieved by Cuba, such as a commitment to free and fair government elections.¹⁶ In October 1992, President George Walker Bush signed the "CDA" into law; many believed the act would finally bring about the downfall of Castro's regime. Castro again would prove them wrong.

During the Clinton years, interest grew in reviving U.S.-Cuban relations. Although the embargo reinforced by the "CDA" did "wreck havoc" on the island it failed to achieve the desired

end-state that its sponsors had anticipated. In response to the on going economic crisis, Castro would publicly announce his discontinued efforts to export revolutionary ideology abroad while initiating market reforms throughout the island. By 1993, Cuba's economy began to show signs of stabilizing.¹⁷

As a response in kind, President Clinton was considering his own efforts to ease sanctions against Cuba. However, conservative members of Congress and hard-line Cuban-American groups proposed passage of the Helms-Burton Act, otherwise known as the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act.¹⁸ The sponsors of this legislation not only aggressively intended to tighten economic sanctions against Cuba but also intended to codify those sanctions thus preventing the president from exercising the "carefully calculated" steps necessary to ease sanctions as called for in the "CDA". Furthermore, the Helms-Burton Act provided additional provisions by U.S. law outlined under four titles:

- ***Title I: Strengthening Sanctions against the Castro government.***
- ***Title II: Describes U.S. policy toward and assistance to a free and independent Cuba.***
- ***Title III: Creates a private cause of action and authorizes U.S. nationals with claims to confiscated property in Cuba to file suit in U.S. courts against persons that may be "trafficking" in that property.***
- ***Title IV: Requires the denial of visas to and exclusion from the U.S. of persons who, after March 12, 1996, confiscate or "traffic" in confiscated property in Cuba claimed by U.S. nationals.***¹⁹

Finally, as a prerequisite for normalizing relations with Cuba the bill required the island nation to abandon its Marxist one party system as well as remove Castro from power and deny him and his brother (Raul) from participation in future Cuban politics.

President Clinton initially opposed the new legislation out of concerns the law would draw harsh criticism from U.S. trading partners who would accuse the U.S. of threatening their inherent right to free trade with Cuba. But, in February 1996, and further worsening relations, the Cuban Air Force shot down two American registered civil aircraft in international airspace, piloted by anti-Castro protesters. This incident resulted in the deaths of three American citizens and one U.S. resident, all anti-Castro protesters belonging to the Miami based Brothers-to-the-Rescue.²⁰ This unlawful act compelled President Clinton to respond decisively by signing the Helms-Burton Act. It should be noted that prior to signing this act into law sponsors agreed to grant the president and future administrations the authority to suspend Titles III and IV for periods of up to six (6) months if deemed necessary to the national interests of the United

States and that such action would expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.²¹ No president to date has enforced Titles III or IV.

CURRENT POLICY (2000-PRESENT)

In May 2001, President George W. Bush announced what his administration called a revised U.S.-Cuba policy:

“The fundamental goal of United States policy toward Cuba is to promote a peaceful transition to a stable, democratic form of government and respect for human rights. Our policy has two fundamental components: maintaining pressure on the Cuban Government for change through the embargo and the Libertad Act while providing humanitarian assistance to the Cuban people, and working to aid the development of civil society in the country.”²²

The foundation of this new policy was principally the continued enforcement of the Helms-Burton Act. However, the president introduced new initiatives aimed at providing both humanitarian assistance and aid to the Cuban people with the stated purpose of giving them greater control of their economic and political destiny.²³

When reviewing the current U.S.-Cuba policy the national strategic objectives (“ends”) have remained virtually unchanged over the past four decades. Those objectives are:

NATIONAL OBJECTIVES (“ENDS”)

- ***Stable, Democratic Cuban Government;***
- ***Respect for Human Rights; and***
- ***Regime Change***

As already stated the Helms-Burton Act is the foundation of the current policy, therefore the titles mentioned earlier provide methods (“ways”) currently in use to achieve the desired “ends.” Although, some titles serve as a direct action (for example, strengthening sanctions) others provide non-directive methods (for example, protection of property rights) aimed at achieving the desired “ends.” Additionally, the president’s initiative to provide aid and humanitarian assistance to the Cuban people also serves as a method to achieve the desired “ends.” These methods clearly provide a “carrot” and “stick” approach with the intent of achieving the desired “ends.”

METHODS OR CONCEPTS FOR ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES (“WAYS”)

- **Strengthening Sanctions (“stick”);**
- **People-to-People Contact Programs (“carrot”);**
- **Protection of Property Rights (“stick”)**
- **Exclusion of Certain Aliens (“stick”)**

The resources used to facilitate the methods or concepts described above are numerous and mostly directed by the Helms-Burton Act. The president also introduced additional measures from 2001 to 2003 that support assistance and aid programs to the island.²⁴

RESOURCES (“MEANS”)

- **Strengthening Sanctions**
 - Enforcement of Economic Embargo
 - Prohibit financing to foreign corporations, U.S. corporations, and U.S. subsidiaries outside the U.S. that may be used to benefit Cuba
 - Denial of Cuban membership in international financial institutions
 - U.S. opposition to termination of the suspension of Cuba from the OAS
- **People-to-People Contact Programs**
 - Develop policy to assist post Castro government transition to democracy
 - Increase number of direct flights between the countries
 - U.S. scholarships for Cuban nationals
 - Establishing direct mail service between the two countries
 - Enhancing Radio and TV Marti
 - Family remittance and travel to Cuba
- **Protection of Property Rights**
 - Liability for trafficking in confiscated property claimed by U.S. nationals
- **Exclusion of Certain Aliens**
 - Exclusion from the United States of aliens who have confiscated property of United States nationals

CURRENT POLICY ANALYSIS

In his article “*Towards a Theory of Strategy: Art Lykke and the Army War College Strategy Model*,” Richard Yarger describes strategy as the employment of all elements of power (political / diplomatic, economic, military, and informational) to achieve the political objectives of the state in cooperation or in competition with other actors pursuing their own objectives.²⁵ Yarger goes on to say, “strategy must identify an appropriate balance among the objectives sought (*ends*),

the methods to pursue the objectives (*ways*), and the resources available (*means*). In short, those “*ends*,” “*ways*” and “*means*” must be consistent.”²⁶

United States policy towards Cuba has failed to achieve national objectives because the “*ways*” and “*means*” fail to complement each other in achieving the desired “*ends*.” For example, one approach is to continue the four-decade effort to isolate and weaken the Castro regime with political and economic sanctions while the other is for Americans to have maximum contact with Cubans in order to foster the development of their society.²⁷ Regrettably, both efforts undermine each other all the while enabling Castro to appeal to Cuban nationalism, which serves to his advantage.

ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

When considering economic sanctions as a method for achieving U.S. policy, the degree and nature of the “economic pain” inflicted on a target country is essential in determining overall success.²⁸ Gary Hufbauer and fellow colleagues affiliated with the Institute of International Economics have conducted extensive studies on numerous U.S. initiated economic sanctions spanning from the 1970s through the 1990s and found in most cases such efforts were not effective in achieving national objectives. Hufbauer concluded the ongoing U.S. led sanctions against Cuba were an “unqualified failure” in achieving national objectives.²⁹ It would therefore appear U.S. administrations have failed to think through the “*ends*,” “*ways*” and “*means*” used in executing U.S. Cuba- policy. In short, U.S. planners failed to foresee two factors, which have significantly undermined current strategy. First, is Castro’s ability to manipulate his economy to offset U.S. sanctions and second, is Castro’s skill at using U.S. sanctions to draw sympathy from the international community and thus legitimize his stature.

First, with the collapse of the Soviet Union Castro was compelled to implement economic reforms in Cuba, which were uncharacteristic considering his Marxist ideology. By the mid 1980s, Castro began to actively seek non-Soviet bloc trading partners as it became increasingly apparent that continued Soviet economic aid was questionable. Eager and willing to take the place of the Soviets were U.S. allies such as Canada, Spain, Britain and France. Then with the collapse of Eastern Europe, Cuba implemented an economic reform program in 1993 that included free markets, cooperatives, small businesses, and joint ventures with foreign partners.³⁰ By doing so, Castro was able to create a mixed socialist economy in which both the Cuban government and the private sector interacted to stimulate the economy through increased tourism and the production of goods for world markets such as sugar, tobacco and nickel. By the mid 1990s, these reforms were producing much needed hard currency (mostly

U.S. dollars). Then in 1993, Castro decriminalized the use of foreign currency and in 1995 allowed Cubans to use both pesos and dollars, which further accelerated the economic expansion.³¹ As a result, Cuba's GDP growth rate from 1996-2000 was an average 4.6%, a very respectable performance considering the restraints imposed by U.S. sanctions.³²

As U.S. strategy continued to rely on sanctions to end the Castro legacy, a second underestimated factor enhanced Cuba's economic revival. Castro's decision to decriminalize the use of U.S. dollars in 1993 would become the island's principle economic lifeline when combined with the special exemptions granted by the U.S. to Cuban-Americans. Since the Carter Administration, Cuban-Americans have been allowed to travel and send U.S. dollars to Cuba. Although, it is difficult to estimate the actual amount of U.S. dollars sent to Cuban family members on the island, U.S. officials estimate Cuban remittances alone have averaged more than \$1 billion per year since 2000.³³ This is significant when considering most of this money is spent by Cubans in government-owned dollar stores that in turn produce hard currency revenues for Castro's regime that exceed the profits made by the island's tourist industry and sugar and nickel exports combined.³⁴ Ironically, the strongest supporters for continued economic sanctions are the same individuals helping to defeat them --Cuban-Americans.

A third underestimated factor and one that is closely associated with the remittance issue is Cuba's tourism trade. Federal law forbids Americans to travel to Cuba for recreational purposes. However, that did not stop the estimated quarter of a million Americans who visited the island in 2001 in contrast to the two million Europeans, Mexicans, Canadians, and others who visited the island during that same year.³⁵ Considering gross revenues for Cuban tourism netted 1.9 billion in 2000, it is not surprising that President Bush has stepped up efforts to identify and punish Americans who visit Cuba in violation of U.S. laws.³⁶ Nevertheless, it will still be difficult to stop those who persist in violating U.S. law. Jamie Plog of Mill Valley, California is just one American out of thousands who visit Cuba illegally every year. In 1998, Mrs. Plog flew from San Francisco to Mexico City where she obtained a visa, which was stamped after arriving in Havana.³⁷ As a matter of routine, Cuban immigration authorities do not stamp U.S. passports, and as a result, Mrs. Plog was able to pass through United States immigration after spending three weeks in Cuba dancing the meringue.³⁸ As tourism is expected to increase yearly it is easy to see how Castro continues to subdue the negative impact of U.S. sanctions.

U.S. relations with the island have helped shape Cuban nationalism since the late 1800s. History records that much of that influence has been hostile, thus causing many Cubans to be suspicious of U.S. intentions. Ironically, Castro has made a political career at exploiting these

suspensions if nothing more than to legitimize his stature among Cubans and the international community. Longtime Interior Ministry official Juan Antonio Rodriguez Menier, who worked directly for Castro, sums it up best by writing:

"Fidel Castro has convinced many Cubans and others abroad that he is the champion of the poor when, in fact, he has manipulated the poverty of his once relatively well-off country in order to maintain his personal power and pursue his private agenda."³⁹

Although Castro has made numerous comments in the past expressing, his desire to lift U.S. sanctions there is compelling evidence to suggest that when "*the U.S. lightens-up, Castro tightens up!*" One recent example was in February 1996 when Castro authorized the Cuban air force to shoot down the aircraft belonging to the Miami based "Brothers-to-the-Rescue." By October 1995, Clinton had relaxed travel and other restrictions to the island and was moving toward normalization of relations with Cuba even though he was under political pressure from conservatives to sign the Helms-Burton Act into law. In addition, many of Clinton's top advisors considered the embargo a fossil of the cold war and supported the administration efforts to normalize relations with Cuba.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, this would all change immediately after the "Brothers-to-the-Rescue" incident. President Clinton would later say,

"The deliberate decision to murder those people changed everything, and it made me wonder whether Mr. Castro was hoping we never would normalize relations so that he could use us as an excuse for the failures of his regime."⁴¹

If lifting sanctions and normalizing relations with the U.S. were Castro's top priorities he would never have authorized the shoot down just as Clinton was attempting to normalize relations and Congress was presenting a bill to strengthen the embargo. In short, it could hardly come as a surprise to Castro that immediately after such an incident, Clinton would be compelled to take retaliatory action by signing the Helms-Burton Act into law thus ensuring the continued embargo. And why not, considering the more embargo supporters proclaim the importance of the sanctions, the more they fatten the scapegoat argument for Castro's claim that the United States – rather than his own policies – is responsible for Cuba's dismal economy and repression.⁴²

Finally, it is interesting to note that in his book *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered* Clyde Hufbauer writes, sanctions are of limited value in achieving foreign policy goals that depend on

compelling the target country to take actions it stoutly resists.⁴³ In this case, Castro is the target country (Cuba) who has for year's strategically isolated Cuba from U.S. influence while successfully convincing outsiders that Cubans in general have gained far more during the four decades of his rule than they would have under Yankee democracy.

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACTS

As sanctions are employed against Cuba as the heavy stick approach in U.S. strategy, people-to-people contacts have tended to foster friendly relations between the people of our two nations thus serving as the carrot. The program was intended to encourage contacts between ordinary Americans and ordinary Cubans in a belief that such contacts would increase Cubans' understanding of the U.S. system of government and could aid Cubans' in the development of civil society, which is considered essential in the islands eventual transition to democracy.⁴⁴ However, this program has serious flaws, which prevent it from contributing to the achievement of U.S. objectives.

First, and most important, is that current U.S. policy forbids Americans from traveling to Cuba unless for academic, cultural, or family reasons. How can a program that encourages contacts between ordinary Americans and Cubans with the intention of developing good will between two nations be expected to work when only a small percentage of Americans are eligible? Consider that in 2001, 120,000 Cuban-Americans traveled to Cuba in contrast to the 2 million tourists --mostly European-- who visited the island that same year.⁴⁵

In addition to academic and cultural contacts, the U.S. government provides substantial economic aid to Cuban dissident groups that promote nonviolent democratic change in Cuba. However, there is virtually no support or effort given to Cuban intellectuals and mid-level officials who are far more numerous and influential in Cuban affairs than those opposition groups on the island.⁴⁶ By making a distinction between Cuban officials whom Washington ignores and Cuban dissidents whom it supports, U.S. policy will only make the transition to democracy that much more difficult.

SUITABILITY, FEASIBILITY, ACCEPTABILITY:

Another way to analyze the current Cuban-American policy is to consider its suitability (will attainment accomplish the effect desired), feasibility, (can the action be accomplished by the means available), and acceptability (are the consequences of the cost justified by the importance of the effect desired).

SUITABLE: United States strategy toward Cuba is not "*suitable*" because it focuses too much on economic sanctions as a "way" to achieve national objectives while limiting "ways" that

encourage people-to-people contacts. For reasons already discussed, sanctions and contact programs have contributed little to Cuba's movement towards democracy and regime change. Recently, a bipartisan advisory group including congressional leaders, businessmen and influential Cuban-Americans issued a 16-page report recommending the Bush Administration break what they called 41 years of a failed policy. The report concludes, "Despite the diverse perspective of our members, we agree that the time is ripe for engagement, not isolation, and that should become the core of U.S. policy toward Cuba."⁴⁷ Current U.S. policy has also given Castro the means to rally nationalistic support for his failed policies both internationally and domestically while using the U.S. as his scapegoat. William Ratliff, a research fellow and curator for the Americas Collection at the Hoover Institution, writes:

"...the Helms Burton Law alienates allies worldwide and will poison relations between the United States and Cuba for decades to come. Castro will benefit no matter what we do, but on balance, he gains more if we maintain the sanctions because they provide a scapegoat for his own repression and economic failures even as they enable him to maintain his cherished global image as the scourge of U.S. imperialism."⁴⁸

It is also interesting to note that Cuba's most prominent dissidents, including Nobel Peace Prize nominee Oswaldo Paya, leader of the respected Varela Project and human rights activist Eliardo Sanchez argue that U.S. sanctions are not effective and should be lifted.⁴⁹

FEASIBLE: United States strategy is not "*feasible*" because U.S. sanctions have proven ineffective while giving Castro a pulpit to justify his ideology. Consider the findings of a roundtable discussion on Cuban-American relations at the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College in January 1992:

"US policy is counter-productive and is one of the factors enabling Castro to remain in power. Castro plays the confrontation game extremely well. Over the years, he has been highly successful in manipulating the Yankee threat to mobilize the Cuban people behind his leadership and policies."⁵⁰

Those who participated in this discussion further recommended that the United States change the nature of its relationship with Cuba in a way that opens up the island to U.S. influence.⁵¹ In short, take the means away from Castro that he so effectively uses against the United States. For example, U.S. policy is firmly committed to isolating Cuba economically and diplomatically. Nevertheless, when our closest allies and organizations such as the United

Nations conduct and encourage free trade and diplomacy with Cuba, it is easy to see how Castro's manipulation can be so effective.

ACCEPTABLE: United States strategy is not "*acceptable*" in achieving the desired "ends." Initially, most Americans accepted sanctions as a required purpose to a desired "*end*" *but now that opinion has changed*. Most Americans simply believe the current policy towards Cuba only hurts average Cubans while efforts should be made to encourage open dialogue between the countries. Renowned historian Dr. Arthur Schlesinger said it best, "I think the polls indicate that most Americans would welcome a restoration of relations with Cuba, as they have welcomed restoration of relations with China."⁵² In addition, Miami Cubans who once dominated the anti-Castro debate are no longer uniformly hard-line as they once were and now speak in favor of normalized relations with Cuba.⁵³ Supporting this view were members of a Cuban advisory board representing the most influential Cuban business leaders in Miami whose recent polling found that a majority of Cuban exiles now favor a non-confrontational approach to Cuba.⁵⁴

RISK ASSESSMENT

The strategy of U.S. policy is to make life difficult everywhere in Cuba so that Castro is forced to step down from power while Cuba transitions peacefully to a democratic form of government. However, it has already been demonstrated that U.S. strategy has failed to achieve either of these objectives. More than likely Castro will remain in power until his death or is too ill to rule. Once this happens it is not unreasonable to assume that whoever replaces Castro will not have the same ruthless political savvy so successful in keeping the island population appeased. With continued sanctions, economic hardship, and a weak yet oppressive socialistic government, anarchy could ensue thus increasing prospects for a civil war in Cuba. In a worst case scenario, civil war could break out, with Cuban Americans fighting with and supplying arms to one side as hundreds of thousands of Cubans attempt to flee to the United States.⁵⁵ Richard Nuccio, a former special advisor to President Clinton who helped author the Helms-Burton Act stated,

"US policy towards Cuba is schizophrenic. The official goal is to promote a peaceful transition to democracy. But the Helms-Burton approach is what I call the pressure cooker model for change. You screw down the lid and turn up the heat until the lid blows off."⁵⁶

Considering the Defense Intelligence Agency has concluded that Cuba does not pose a significant military or strategic threat to the United States or the region, it is questionable

whether U.S. officials or the nation would be willing to become involved in such a conflict other than dealing with thousands of refugees.

The potential second and third order effects resulting from continued civil unrest in Cuba could range from mass exodus of Cuban refugees fleeing the island, continued violations of human rights, and willful participation in international drug trafficking and increased support and safe haven for state sponsored terrorism.

Finally, there is considerable evidence that China desires closer relations with Cuba. Both countries have exchanged military delegations, including visits by defense ministers and top ranking generals throughout the 1990s. Of particular interest, has been China's desire to use the island as a location for electronic eavesdropping on U.S. communications. In fact, the Chinese have already constructed short-wave facilities capable of broadcasting radio transmissions from the island back to China.⁵⁷ As the U.S. continues to isolate Cuba economically and diplomatically there is a significant risk that Castro would purposely develop closer relations with Beijing therefore increasing tensions – politically and militarily -- between the United States, Cuba, and China. If such a relationship were to develop with a significant Chinese presence on the island, U.S. national interests concerning Cuba could easily escalate to similar levels experienced during the Kennedy Administration. Considering Castro's need for international attention this scenario should be a concern for U.S. officials.

RECOMMENDED REVISED POLICY

The world has changed dramatically since Castro seized power in 1958, but little has changed between Cuba and the United States. Washington still cannot conceive of coexisting with Castro and is still trying to overthrow him by any means other than military force.⁵⁸ The current policy, only serves to sustain a Caribbean dictator who has made a political career reminding the international community as well as fellow Cubans of past and present U.S. imperial arrogance. A new strategy is needed that will realistically achieve U.S. national objectives while at the same time deny Castro the resources employed over the past forty years to legitimize his regime.

A revised U.S.-Cuba policy should continue to strive for peaceful transition to a stable, democratic government with respect for human rights while maintaining order in Cuba. However, regime change would no longer be a national objective. As long as Cuba is not considered a threat to U.S. national interests, it would be unrealistic and hypocritical for U.S. strategy to demand such a requirement. The survival of the Castro regime should be an issue acted upon by the Cuban people. The author proposes the following new strategy:

- Lift the ban on trade with, investment in, and travel to Cuba without commitments by the Cuban government linked to democratization, human rights, and economic reforms. This obviously would require the Congress to repeal the Helms-Burton Act, which promotes confrontation without any realistic hope of achieving national objectives.⁵⁹
 - As an incentive to achieve commitments by the Cuban government for democratic change, human rights, economic reform, and expropriation claims the United States would continue to recommend withholding Cuban membership to international financial organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- Immediately normalize diplomatic relations with the Castro government and seek to replace established interest sections with either consulate or embassy status in both nations' capitals.
 - Develop incentives that encourage contacts by U.S. representatives with Cuban intellectuals and mid-level officials who are trying to find creative ways to solve their country's problems and are far more numerous and politically well positioned than the far smaller opposition movements.⁶⁰
 - Develop stronger more unified diplomatic efforts with allies (European, Asian, and South American) aimed at pressuring Cuba to significant reforms concerning human rights, early democratization, and related market oriented economic reforms.⁶¹
 - Continue to withhold membership to the Organization of American States until definitive political, economical and human rights reforms take place.⁶²
 - Be prepared to withdraw all U.S. personnel from Guantanamo Bay once definitive political, economical and human rights reforms take place.
- Third, people-to people contacts should be truly non-government and not orchestrated and manipulated by the U.S. government behind the scenes.⁶³
 - Cancel all overt political aid to the U.S. opposition groups in Cuba.
 - Continue strong support to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating within Cuba, including religious organizations.
 - Task the State Department to publish a comprehensive national campaign plan aimed at assisting Cuba in rejoining the Western Hemisphere. This commission should have prominent Cuban-Americans as the core of the commission; experts from other nationalities; leading business leaders; and educators.

CONCLUSION

United States strategy regarding Cuba will determine the island nation's economic and democratic future. If our strategic leaders continue to employ current policy, the "ends" will inevitably be a more difficult to achieve peacefully. However, if these leaders adopt a policy that

encourages active engagement between the two countries then we may be better able to see a peaceful transition to democracy post Castro. Cuba has tremendous resources that will allow it to prosper and countries that prosper make better neighbors, and better serve our strategic interests. The danger for the U.S. today is not that post-Castro Cuba will stay communist and strong; it is that Cuba after Fidel will be divided, unstable, and weak.⁶⁴

This Strategic Research Paper has argued that current Cuban-American policy is counter-productive, that is, it will not result in the achievement of stated U.S. objectives. Therefore, the current policy is not suitable, feasible, nor acceptable in terms of achieving stated or desired strategic "ends."

The author initially reviewed past Cuban-American relations that led to the present policy. Second, the current policy was analyzed by discussing the "ends," "ways," and "means." Suitability, feasibility, and acceptability of the current policy were also reviewed and a risk assessment conducted to determine the potential impact on future national security. Finally, this paper concluded with a recommendation for a revised Cuban-American strategy.

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ENDNOTES

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⁴Ibid.

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⁸Ibid.

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²³Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, President Bush Announces Initiative for a New Cuba, 20 May 2002; available from <<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/10321.htm>>; Internet; accessed 14 October 2003.

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⁴³Ibid., 92.

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